

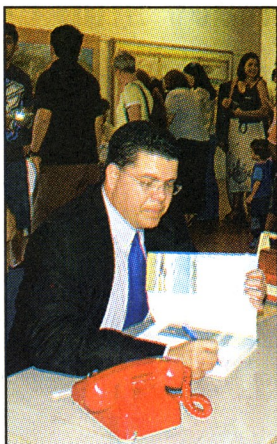
"The Lago Story" by Jorge R. Ridderstaat is published by Charuba

Seven years of hard work and research reached fruition for Central Bank economist Jorge R. Ridderstaat with the christening of his epic historical work "The Lago Story -The compelling story of an oil company on the island of Aruba" at the SINFA Gallery in San Nicolas on Saturday evening. Alice van Romondt, of Charuba, which published the book, served as Master of Ceremonies to the festive event.

Lending their talents to the introduction of Jorge's book were the "Beautiful Voices" of Marina Haynes, Young Dancers, Bito's Steelband, and members of the Aruba Classic Car Club revived the am-biance of a long-ago era by arriving to the festivities in such vehicles as a mint condition Ford Edsel.

Roland Peterson, president of the San Nicolas Business Association, recollected his years of growing up with the Lago Refinery as a part of his life, with two of what he calls his "silent emotions," one of them titled "The Flame."

Finally, the work was christened in Aruban tradition by



Jorge signing his book at its launching

Jorge and his "Madrina" and "Padrino" for the publication of this book, Betty Goeloe of the Arubiana department of the National Library, who was his right-hand in the detailed researching of the history of Lago Refinery, and Dufy Kock, a former employee of Lago who proof-read the drafts.

The public was then invited into the gallery to view much of the memorabilia from the Lago years, which began

in 1925, when the first representatives came to the island to establish an oil storage and transshipment station on Aruba, to Lago's departure from the island in 1985, on the eve of Aruba achieving "Status Aparte."

The work is a beautiful oversize book of 235 pages containing historical text and archive photographs, with an additional 100 pages of appendix tables and timelines for quick reference. It is entirely in English rather than Papiamentu, as, Jorge explains, he intended it to be an "international book for all nations, not only Aruba."

Dufy Kock, who maintains a website where former Lago workers and their children keep in contact, confirms that there are over 500 "Lagolites" in the United States keenly anticipating this historical work. Lagolites are the children of the Americans who worked at the refinery, many of them born and educated on Aruba, who then went on to continue their lives in the U.S. On Saturday night, four Lagolites, Karin Hoglund, Susanne Gravendijk, Jack

Watkins and Steve Frengen, were present for the inauguration of the "The Lago Story," having coincidentally just arrived on Aruba for their annual vacation. When asked to say a few words to the gathering, Karin Hoglund could only say, "It's good to be home." Along with all the others attending the book launching, they eagerly lined up to purchase their copy and have it signed by the author.

An Aruban Lagolite, Monique Beaujon, also currently living in the U.S., was present as well.

"The Lago Story" traces sixty years of what was the singular most important factor in bringing prosperity, technological advancement and a high standard of living to the island of Aruba, offering the islanders opportunities for work, education and an advancement of lifestyle unprecedented in the Caribbean. It is a very exciting story, with the adventure of the war years, and the hardships overcome in the early years by those determined to see the facility successfully established.

Jorge gives an economic

history of the island before the advent of the refinery, and also after, when Aruba focused on economic success through tourism.

The book is written in a lively, interesting manner, and brings to life characters whose names have had an everlasting impact on the island.

Everyone recognizes the name of the first General Manager of Lago, Lloyd G. Smith, who was awarded Knight Commander in the Order of Oranje Nassau in 1946; the first person on Aruba to be knighted by the throne.

Captain Robert Rodger, who first came to Aruba in 1924 and judged it suitable for the proposed facility is the namesake of Rodger's Beach on the eastern point of Aruba.

Over the years, the inhabitants of the Lago Colony interacted with their Aruban hosts, cementing a singular relationship between Aruba and the United States that continues today.

"The Lago Story" is available at most bookstores and sells for 65 Aruban florins (\$37.)